



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

REVIEWS AND NOTES

ROUSSEAU and ROMANTICISM, by Irving Babbitt.
Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1919.
Pp. 426. Price \$3.50.

Professor Babbitt's new book shares the merits of its predecessors. It is a surprisingly honest confession of faith; it displays the results of a highly respectable reading knowledge; and it is so delightfully archaic in its remoteness from our modern world. Only such readers of the book as have some acquaintance with medieval works like *Malleus Maleficarum* or Bodin's *Demonomania* are in the position to appreciate the exquisite fragrance of antiquity this specimen eruditionis scholasticae exhales. The reviewer is indeed in doubt as to whether Mr. Babbitt in this case is the actual author of an original work or merely the editor of an hitherto unknown companion volume to *Malleus Maleficarum*. There were, according to the best authorities, witches of the male species as well as witches of the female species. We may therefore assume that for ecclesia militans a *Malleus Maleficorum* must have been a weapon no less indispensable than the joint product of the two formidable Dominican friars proved to be. Remembering how cleverly the humanists of Viri Obscuri fame concealed their identity: is it too fantastic a hypothesis for the reviewer to propose that Mr. Babbitt's name and the title of his book are cryptograms for an anonymous medieval author of the *Malleus Maleficorum* recently discovered? It was in Salem, Mass. where the last American autodafés on record took place. Why should the diligent search of an archeologist of a neighboring town have remained unrewarded?

Be that as it may. For the reader's convenience the reviewer drops his hypothesis and proceeds to offer a few suggestions for a potential revised edition of this *New Malleus Maleficorum*. An esthetic pleasure in antiquarianism does not excuse the reviewer from scrutinizing the scientific aspects of so interesting a case of pseudonymity. First of all a word with regard to the title. Rousseau, it must be understood, does not mean the Rousseau of the *Social Contract* who became the father of the American and French revolutions, of the Declaration of Independence, and consequently of our modern conceptions of humanity, liberty, and democracy. Mr. Babbitt seems to have very little sympathy with the democratic movements of our time. Rousseau to him means exclusively that oscillating compound of sincerity, cynicism, sadic flagellantism, and sentimentality which we both abhor and admire in the *Confessions*.

Rousseau means the archetype of an emotionalism uncontrolled by reason and unchecked by "decorum". It is in this sense that Rousseauism is placed in juxtaposition with Romanticism. And Romanticism in turn does not mean the reaction against the shallowness of the materialistic phase of rationalism and against the sterility of pseudo-classicism. Nor does Mr. Babbitt include the positive and permanent achievements of romanticism in philosophy, religion, science, literature, and art. What he understands by romanticism is only the negation of conventional decorum, the eccentric vagaries and the fatalistic pessimism of certain individual phenomena within the whole of the romantic movement, not romanticism itself. It is the purpose of the book thus misnamed to arraign the maleficent twins Rousseauism-Romanticism, or rather their caricature, before the tribunal of a "positive and critical humanism." For such is the baptismal name of the author's personal faith and code of decorum. He does not pretend to apply the methods of impartial and objective scholarship. He frankly starts from the conviction of his own infallibility, measuring persons and things by his own arbitrary standard. He excludes any fact, argument, or witness that might possibly mitigate the death sentence decided upon before the trial has opened. He is the lawmaker, the judge, the state's attorney, the jury, the sheriff, and the hangman, all in one. A partial list of victims shows the extent and the intensity of the prosecution: Baudelaire, Bergson, Berlioz, Blake, Boehme, Browning, Byron, Carlyle, Chateaubriand, Coleridge, Constant, John Dewey, Emerson, Fichte, Flaubert, Gautier, Goethe (in part), Hawthorne, Hoffmann, Hölderlin, Victor Hugo, Ibsen, Kant, Kleist, Lamartine, Leconte de Lisle, Maeterlinck, George Moore, Musset, Nietzsche, Novalis, Plotinus, Poe, Jean Paul, Ruskin, George Sand, Schelling, Shaftesbury, Friedrich Schlegel, A. W. Schlegel, Schopenhauer, Shelley, Madame de Staël, Stendhal, Synge, Tagore, Tolstoy, Richard Wagner, Whitman, Wordsworth, Zola. Born in different countries, climes, and ages, these ill-fated objects inquisitionis babbitticae have all been found guilty of the same offense: they have failed to conform to the inquisitor's orthodox creed called a positive and critical humanism.

It would be a mistake to associate Mr. Babbitt's brand of humanism with men like Erasmus or Reuchlin. As in the case of the other two isms, Mr. Babbitt has chosen to give the old word *humanism* which to most of us has become the cherished symbol of enlightenment and spiritual freedom, an entirely new and contrary meaning. When he says "humanism" he means in reality Salemite puritanism, i.e. that sterile pseudo-religion whose god is not our Christian God of Love but an idol of fear and negation, the demon of the Torquemadas and Hoch-

stratens. Mr. Babbitt's humanism is calvinistic fanaticism with Christianity left out. No wonder that the *New Malleus* contrives to transform a galaxy of illustrious stars into a sombre morgue filled with corpses maimed and defiled beyond recognition.

Considering the internationality of the victims, the *Malleus* belongs to a group of abortive contributions to Comparative Literature—abortive, because the magnitude of the material outgrows the capacity of the respective author's mind. Mr. Babbitt's wholesale condemnation of French, English, and American celebrities will no doubt meet with competent criticism elsewhere. The present reviewer has therefore limited his judgment to the general tendencies of the book and to the discussion of a few points in a field somewhat familiar to him.

The way in which Mr. Babbitt applies his theory of the inner check to literary criticism may be illustrated by the following case. On page 181 Goethe's *Faust* is quoted as a warning example of the fearful consequences to the man who lacks the inner check. "Faust after all is only consistent when having identified the spirit that says no, which is the true voice of conscience, with the devil, he proceeds to dedicate himself to vertigo (dem Taumel weih' ich mich)." An amazing interpretation indeed! Not only does Mr. Babbitt fail to read the lines following the passage quoted, but he ascribes to Goethe a knowledge of Mr. Babbitt's pet phrase "inner check," and argues accordingly: Babbitt's inner check = the true voice of conscience; Goethe's inner check = the devil; ergo: Goethe's god = the devil. The reviewer suggests that Mr. B. read the passage beginning line 1335—"Ein Teil von jener Kraft," etc. to line 1358 with Julius Goebel's commentary.

On p. 170 Mr. B. finds fault with Faust for not turning from the Erdgeist "to the spirit that is revelant to man, a spirit that sets bounds to every inordinate craving, including the inordinate craving for knowledge (libido sciendi)"; "Faust gives himself to the devil in what was, in the time of the youthful Goethe, the newest fashion: he becomes a Rousseauist. . . and so definition yields to indiscriminate feeling ('Gefühl ist alles')." On p. 287 the subject is continued. "Faust breaks down the scruples of Marguerite by proclaiming the supremacy of feeling." After quoting lines 3426 to 3456. . . "Herz! Liebe! Gott! Ich habe keinen Namen dafür! Gefühl ist alles. . ." Mr. B. remarks: "The upshot of this enthusiasm that overflows all boundaries and spurns definition as mere smoke that veils its heavenly glow is the seduction of a poor peasant girl. Such is the romantic contrast between the ideal and the real." That is to say: our author picks out certain passages from the context in support of his theory of the inner check. He disregards arbitrarily the fact that in the Erdgeist scene (as indeed throughout the whole

drama) Faust is in a state of turmoil, transition, and development. Similarly Faust's confession of faith to Gretchen is not an indiscriminate and therefore, from Mr. Babbitt's point of view, immoral emotionalism but a sincere expression of the very best there is in him. It is not because Faust fails to rationalize his beautiful and deeply religious conception of God that he ruins Gretchen, but because the purity of that conception is subsequently troubled by his erotic passion and because the intrigues of Mephistopheles frustrate Faust's intention of saving Gretchen from disgrace. "Gefühl ist alles," in its proper connection means the unsophisticated voice of the heart, the mystic contemplation and intuition of the divine, the truly religious experience of the unity of God, nature and man, an experience which no reasoning and no defining of boundaries will ever be able to give. There was no Rousseau necessary to generate such a "Gefühl" in Goethe. Does Mr. Babbitt really not know what the mystics from Eckhart to Fräulein von Klettenberg, what Spinoza, Klopstock, and Herder (*Gott*) meant to Goethe in his evolution of religious concepts? Again Goebel's Faust commentary might have given him all the information he needed for the purposes of his disquisitions on Goethe. However, important as the history of mystic and of monistic thought is for an understanding of the romantic movement in general and of its German phase in particular, Mr. B. contents himself with brilliant superficialities.

Pp.330 f. he offers another specimen of his interpretive sagacity. The work Faust is doing at the end of his life is only of an "utilitarian" character ("happiness of material efficiency" he calls it). "This is the solution of the problem of happiness that Goethe offers at the end of the second Faust, and we may affirm without hesitation that it is a sham solution." How unfortunate for the reputation of our author that he did not hesitate! We can hardly imagine a more complete ignorance of so monumental a work as Goethe's *Faust* is in spite of all aspersions from the direction of the inner check. Not to mention the parallel of *Wanderjahre* with its significant subtitle *Die Entsagenden*: did Mr. B. really fail to grasp the symbolism of it all? Did he really fail to read the poem to the end?

Did he not even get as far as to the words "Und hat an ihm die Liebe gar von Oben teilgenommen, begegnet ihm die sel'ge Schar mit herzlichem Willkommen"? No, love has no part in the religion of the inner check, and our humanist has evidently never responded to St. Paul's enjoinder that charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. A critic so utterly loveless cannot feel the power of love in others, and love is after all the key to understanding. The reviewer is not cruel enough to expose by more literal quotations Mr. Babbitt's peculiar Goethe philology and therefore merely refers to pp.

360 ff. It is, of course a trifle for Mr. B. to ascribe to Goethe "the very classical definition of genius:" "Du nur, Genius, mehrst in der Natur die Natur." We find it in Schiller's *Votivtafeln*, No. 38.

While Goethe is at least granted some extenuating circumstances in that he, "at his best shows an ethical realism worthy of Dr. Johnson"(!), Kant's doom is complete. Since, as our author would have it, Kant failed to associate genius in art and literature with a strict discipline of the imagination to a "purpose," "the central impotence of the whole Kantian system" is conclusively proven (p. 42). Mr. Babbitt does not know what Kant meant by "Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck." He does not know of the difference between an esthetic purpose and an ethical purpose. He attributes to the most rigorous of all moralists a lack of moral purpose.¹ Mr. Babbitt never heard of the categorical imperative. He never read the words: "Handle so, dass die Maxime deines Willens jederzeit zugleich als Prinzip einer allgemeinen Gesetzgebung gelten könne." If known to Mr. B. this one sentence could have filled the hollow shell of his negative inner check with the sadly missing core of wholesome substance. Instead, the inquisitorial method of arbitrary selection of evidence has once more turned a fact into its very opposite. Let the Christian reader's wondering eyes gaze again on the decree of Salem: "The central impotence of the whole Kantian system." For was it not a Moralist far greater than the sage of Königsberg, whose ethical principles reappeared in the philosophical terminology of Kant? (cf. Math. 7, 12). Does the advocate of the inner check dare declare His system impotent too?

The relations of the storm and stress movement to romanticism are complex and have not as yet received an adequate treatment. It is to be hoped, however, that this urgent demand will be met by Rudolf Unger in his forthcoming new work on romanticism. No other scholar, indeed, may be relied upon with greater confidence to do justice to so difficult a subject than the author of *Hamann und die Aufklärung*, a work of truly classical perfection. Mr. B., unfamiliar with that as with so much other essential material, lightly assumes an identity between the two movements regardless of historical facts. It is not given to him to see things in the perspective proportions of historical evolution. Thus his chapters: Romantic Genius, Imagination, Morality (The Ideal; The Real), Love, Irony, Romanticism and Nature, Melancholy, The Present Outlook, are so many unfermented concoctions of half-truths and errors with the same, insipid, flavor of the inner check. Nowhere has there been made an effort to get at the facts in their historical con-

¹ The moralist Ibsen fares equally badly, cf. p. 330.

nection. Rousseau once branded the evil genius of the human race, the blood-hounds of Mr. Babbitt's savage Aristotelianism chase up and down, right and left, on the highways and byways of the world's history, anywhere within the unmeasured area of time and space between Adam and Bergson, to trail Rousseauite heretics and to devour whomsoever chance throws into their gaping jaws. Rousseau, thus runs the mathematical argument, is not only one of the many leaders but *the* leader of the storm and stress, and since Rousseau is likewise *the* leader of the romantic movement, it follows that both movements are the same thing. On pp. 97 ff., in a feeble and haphazard way, attention is called to certain modifications "Herder (whose influence on German romanticism is very great)" gave to the primitivism of Rousseau. Now instead of dropping this important subject, as Mr. B. does, after a few desultory remarks on minor details, a true scholar would have found it an inevitable task to determine just what Herder meant: first for storm and stress, second for romanticism. Even without making a special study of the subject Mr. B. might have learnt from Haym's *Herder*, that Herder as early as 1769 had turned from Rousseau's to Montesquieu's conception of organized civilization; and Unger might have shown him the way to Hamann and through him to mysticism and pietism and Socrates which all, in successive stages and with many gradual changes became vital factors first in the *Genieperiode* and then again in the romantic movement. Mr. B. could then not have failed to observe that besides Rousseau there were very many other forces at work in the battle against the barrenness of rationalism; and that after the interregnum of extreme classicism, when the romanticists continued the struggle, the movement became too universal in its ramifications, too intense in its quest for new foundations of modern life, to be arbitrarily reduced to a scholastic, if convenient little formula like Rousseauism. But our author is bent upon words regardless of meaning. Because the romanticists discuss the problem of genius, *Genieperiode* and romanticism are identical. It is the same *circulus vitiosus* as in the use of the name of Rousseau.

If it is too exacting a demand that Mr. B. read Unger's chapter "Der Geniegedanke" (*Hamann*, pp. 275 ff.), the reviewer suggests a rapid glance at Walzel's booklet *Deutsche Romantik* where, on pp. 32 f. and pp. 53 f., the evolution of the romantic conception of genius from storm and stress through Fichte and Friedrich Schlegel to Schelling is briefly outlined.

In the same booklet Mr. B. might have found a great deal more enlightenment with regard to romantic irony than he is himself able to give in his chapter on the same subject. Compare also Carl Enders, *Friedrich Schlegel*, p. 358. Starting his argumentation against this cardinal sin of the romanticists

with a misunderstood quotation from Friedrich Schlegel, he remarks *passim* that "the romanticist inclines to measure his own distinction by his remoteness from any possible centre" and concludes that eccentricity, i. e. the loss of the soul's *terra firma* is the secret of romantic irony, paradox, and striving for endlessness. "Can anyone maintain seriously that there is aught in common between the striving for endlessness of the German romanticists and the supreme and perfect Centre that Dante glimpses at the end of the Divine Comedy and in the presence of which he becomes dumb?" (p. 259). Professor Walzel indeed maintains this seriously on the ground of irrefutable testimony which our inquisitor prefers to ignore; cf. Walzel, l. c., p. 19 f., especially: . . . "uns dem Göttlichen zu nähern, eine sehnsuchtsvolle Liebe zum Göttlichen, eine religiöse Liebe zum Unendlichen, wie Schleiermacher sie vertritt" . . . If Mr. B. translates the German word "Das Unendliche" by a mathematical endlessness, he misses entirely its religious symbolism. Instead of weighing the actual facts as found in Fichte, Schleiermacher, Schlegel, Novalis, Schelling, etc. Mr. B. takes erratic excursions to Nietzsche and Freud. "According to the Freudians the personality that has become incapable of any conscious aim is not left entirely rudderless. The guidance that it is unable to give itself is supplied to it by some "wish" usually obscene, from the subconscious realm of dreams." Now, what has Professor Freud's theory of the unconscious (why did Mr. B. not mention Jung and Keller as antidotes?) to do with Schlegel's theory of irony or with Novalis's symbolical dreams and Märchen? Is it worthy of a scholar to sling the mud of obscenity, even by way of indirections, on such earnest seekers for truth as Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel? In the same spirit of hostility the insanity of Hölderlin and Lenau is utilized as bearing witness against the centrifugal power of romantic philosophy. As to the problem of a centre Mr. B. should have known—there is no excuse for not knowing facts which ought to be familiar to any graduate student in the literary departments of Harvard University—that caprice, paradox, and irony in Schlegel's sense are unthinkable without a centre. Irony is the faculty of the mind to travel at will from the centre to the periphery and back again. How does Mr. B. imagine a periphery without a centre to look? Let Mr. B. read with some care certain "fragments" by Schlegel, e. g. *Ideen*, 155: "Ich habe einige Ideen ausgesprochen, die aufs Centrum deuten, ich habe die Morgenröte begrüsst nach meiner Ansicht, aus meinem Standpunkt. Wer den Weg kennt, tue desgleichen nach seiner Ansicht, aus seinem Standpunkt."

Again in his chapter on Romantic Love our inquisitor revels in pharisaic condemnation. "This lack of definite object appears just as clearly in the German symbol of romantic love—

the blue flower. The blue flower resolves itself at last, it will be remembered, into a fair feminine face—a face that cannot, however, be overtaken. . . . The object is thus elusive because . . . it is not, properly speaking, an object at all but only a dalliance of the imagination with its own dreams. Cats, says Riarol, do not caress us, they caress themselves upon us.” The question is, if the author of such glittering witticisms wishes to be taken at all seriously. The reviewer ventures at least to say that Mr. Babbitt’s knowledge of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* does not extend beyond the title page. It seems impossible and yet it is true that this chapter on romantic love was written without a single reference to *Lucinde* and Schleiermacher’s *Vertraute Briefe*. Nor is Schleiermacher ever mentioned anywhere else in the book; probably for the reason that no stratagem or subterfuge could have twisted his conception of “Unendlichkeit” into a mathematical absurdity. It is strange that one of the greatest sinners in striving for “endlessness,” Giordano Bruno, escaped our inquisitor’s vigilance. To be sure, Giordano Bruno was bodily burned at the stake, and his executioner’s successor may therefore have considered the martyr’s soul saved.

The reviewer would have to copy this whole *Malleus Maleficorum*, if he wished to point out the full extent of distortions and misinterpretation to which Mr. Babbitt allowed his prejudices to carry him. Granted the sincerity of his convictions and intentions, the final result of his diligent, if whimsical reading, is nothing but a confusion of issues, a negation of the vital forces in life and literature, for the sake of that utterly barren, scholastic Aristotelianism which four hundred years ago Luther so passionately battled against. Its revival in America, in the writings of Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, and their disciples, if successful, would result in the destruction of the scientific spirit and moral freedom which are the foundations of a civilization worth living for. Fortunately the stars in the heavens may complacently listen to the howling of even the most bloodthirsty of terrestrial bloodhounds. No prosecution will reach them. No envy will blot out their lustre.

Professor Babbitt’s *Rousseau and Romanticism* is one of the most disheartening products of narrow-minded philistinism, pedantic scholasticism, and pharisaic puritanism in literature the reviewer has ever come across.

O. E. LESSING.

University of Illinois.